

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 12478 051040Z

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SUBJECT: DEFENSE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S TOKYO PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: MANILA P 020600Z SEP 75 AND USINFO R 021511Z SEP 75 NOTAL

WE CONFUSED ON SCHLESINGER PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE AGENCY STATED ALL COMMENT ON PHILIPPINE BASES CONTAINED IN EPF 60. HOWEVER, PHILIPPINES DAILY EXPRESS TOKYO CORRESPONDENT EDUARDO LACHICA FILED FOLLOWING STORY WHICH APPEARED ON EXPRESS SEPTEMBER 2 FRONT PAGE:

TITLE: SCHLESINGER SAYS: US BASES IN RP STILL IMPORTANT

BY: EDUARDO LACHICA, EXPRESS MAN IN JAPAN

"TOKYO, SEPT. 1 - THE UNITED STATES STILL CONSIDERS ITS BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES 'EXTREMELY IMPORTANT' AND FINDING ALTERNATIVES TO THEM WILL BE 'VERY COSTLY.'"

"THIS WAS HOW US SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES R. SCHLESINGER
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PAGE 02 MANILA 12478 051040Z

WEIGHED THE VALUE OF SUBIC BAY AND CLARK AIR FORCE BASE AMIDST

REPORTS THAT THE US-RP BASES AGREEMENT WILL BE RENEGOTIATED SOON.

"BRIEFING NEWSMEN COVERING HIS CONSULTATIVE TALKS WITH JAPANESE DEFENSE OFFICIALS, SCHLESINGER INDICATED THE US WOULD NOT READILY GIVE UP THE TWO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS 'MAJOR INVESTMENTS FROM A HISTORICAL POINT OF VIEW AS WELL AS STRATEGIC LOCATION.'

"'NO ONE CAN SUGGEST THEY ARE NOT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT,' HE SAID.

"HE IMPLIED THE US WOULD LIVE 'AT A HIGHER LEVEL OF RISK' AS ITS BASES STRUCTURE DIMINISHES. 'IT IS PLAIN THAT BASES IN NORTHEAST ASIA ARE NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR BASES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.' HE SAID. 'AS ONE GOES TO A SMALLER NUMBER OF BASES, ONE BECOMES INCREASINGLY VULNERABLE TO PRESSURES AND HYPOTHETICALLY TO MILITARY ACTION.'

"IN HIS TALKS WITH JAPAN'S DEFENSE AGENCY DIRECTOR GENERAL MICHITA SAKATA FRIDAY, SCHLESINGER ASSURED THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD HOLD ON TO THE PHILIPPINE BASES.

"THERE ARE OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO SUBIC AND CLARK, SCHLESINGER SAID, SO 'ONE SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT THE LOSS OF THE BASES IS NECESSARILY THE END OF THE WORLD.' BUT HE SAW AMERICAN FORCES OPERATING UNDER GREATER PRESSURE IF THOSE FACILITIES WERE NO LONGER AVAILABLE TO THEM.

"FOR AMERICAN FLEETS TO OPERATE FROM MORE REARWARD BASES LIKE HONOLULU AND GUAM, THEY WOULD NEED A LARGE COMPLEMENT OF OILERS AND OTHER UNDERWAY REPLENISHMENT SHIPS AND THE ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT REQUIRED WOULD BE 'SUBSTANTIAL.'

"SCHLESINGER ANTICIPATED GREAT MORALE PROBLEMS KEEPING THE NAVY'S ALL-VOLUNTEER CREWS AT SEA FOR SIX TO NINE MONTHS AT A TIME. WHATEVER ALTERNATIVES THERE ARE TO HAVING FORWARD BASES WOULD BE 'UNPALATABLE,' HE SAID.

"SCHLESINGER DID NOT APPEAR ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS TO CONVERT SOME OF SUBIC PLANTS FOR UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 MANILA 12478 051040Z

CIVILIAN USES. HE SAID, "WE WILL HAVE TO REVIEW THEM.'

"'I WOULD POINT OUT THAT ANY SUBSTANTIAL COMMERCIALIZATION FIRST DEPENDS UPON THERE BEING A MARKETABLE DEMAND FOR OUTPUT THAT THE BASES REPRESENT,' HE SAID. 'IF THERE IS MARKETABLE DEMAND THEN ONE DIVERTS RESOURCES OF THE BASE AND ONE MAY WIND UP WITH REDUCED MILITARY CAPABILITY.' HE SAID FLATLY, 'SPEAKING FOR THE UNITED STATES, THAT IS NOT OUR OBJECTIVE.'

"SCHLESINGER ADMITTED THAT THE REPORTED PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING TO DISALLOW THE USE OF FOREIGN BASES FOR AGGRESSIVE ACTION AGAINST INDOCHINESE TERRITORY IS A 'CONSTRAINT' ON THE FREEDOM OF ACTION BY AMERICAN FORCES.

".IN COMMENTING ON THE CONTENTS OF THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE MADE BY THE PHILIPPINES AND NORTH VIETNAM IN CONNECTION WITH THE OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM, SCHLESINGER POINTED OUT THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT 'UTTERLY FREE' TO USE THE BASES IN ANY CASE. 'THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE BASES IS DIFFERENT FROM THE PRACTICAL STATUS AND ONE ALWAYS HAS CONSTRAINTS IN THE USE OF FACILITIES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.'" - DAILY EXPRESS FOREIGN SERVICE

ACTION REQUESTED:

POST WOULD APPRECIATE FULL TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW IF AVAILABLE. IF UNAVAILABLE, PLEASE CONFIRM IF INDEED INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE AS REPORTED AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT CIRCUMSTANCES.
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